2017

MICHAEL ATAMIAN, District Wildlife Biologist
CARRIE LOWE, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist

Washington Department of FISH and WILDLIFE

DISTRICT 2 HUNTING PROSPECTS

Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties

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DISTRICT 2 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) District 2 is located in eastern Washington, bordering Idaho, and covers Lincoln, Whitman, and Spokane counties. Game management units (GMUs) in District 2 include 124 (Mount Spokane), 127 (Mica Peak), 130 (Cheney), 133 (Roosevelt), 136 (Harrington), 139 (Steptoe), and 142 (Almota) (Figure 1). The majority of the district is in private ownership, so hunters are highly encouraged to secure access prior to the hunting season or applying for special permits.

The geography of District 2 includes the edge of the Rocky Mountain Range in the east, the Columbia Basin in the west, and the Channeled Scablands and Palouse in between. This diverse geography supports a wide range of habitats that include mixed coniferous forests dominated by Douglas fir, larch, dry Ponderosa pine, some aspen groves, scabland, sagebrush steppe, grasslands, and extensive agricultural lands. Topography varies from ~500 feet above sea level along the Snake River in the south to the 5883-foot Mount Spokane in the north. Dominant river drainages include the Spokane, Palouse, Columbia, & Snake rivers.

District 2 is best known for its deer hunting opportunities, including white-tailed deer in the Spokane and Palouse agricultural lands and mule deer in the Channeled Scablands and breaks of the Snake River. Quality hunting opportunities also exist for other game species, including pheasant and elk, if hunters have secured access to private lands. Moose and bighorn sheep hunters can enjoy quality hunts if they are selected for special permit hunts and if they have secured private land access prior to applying.

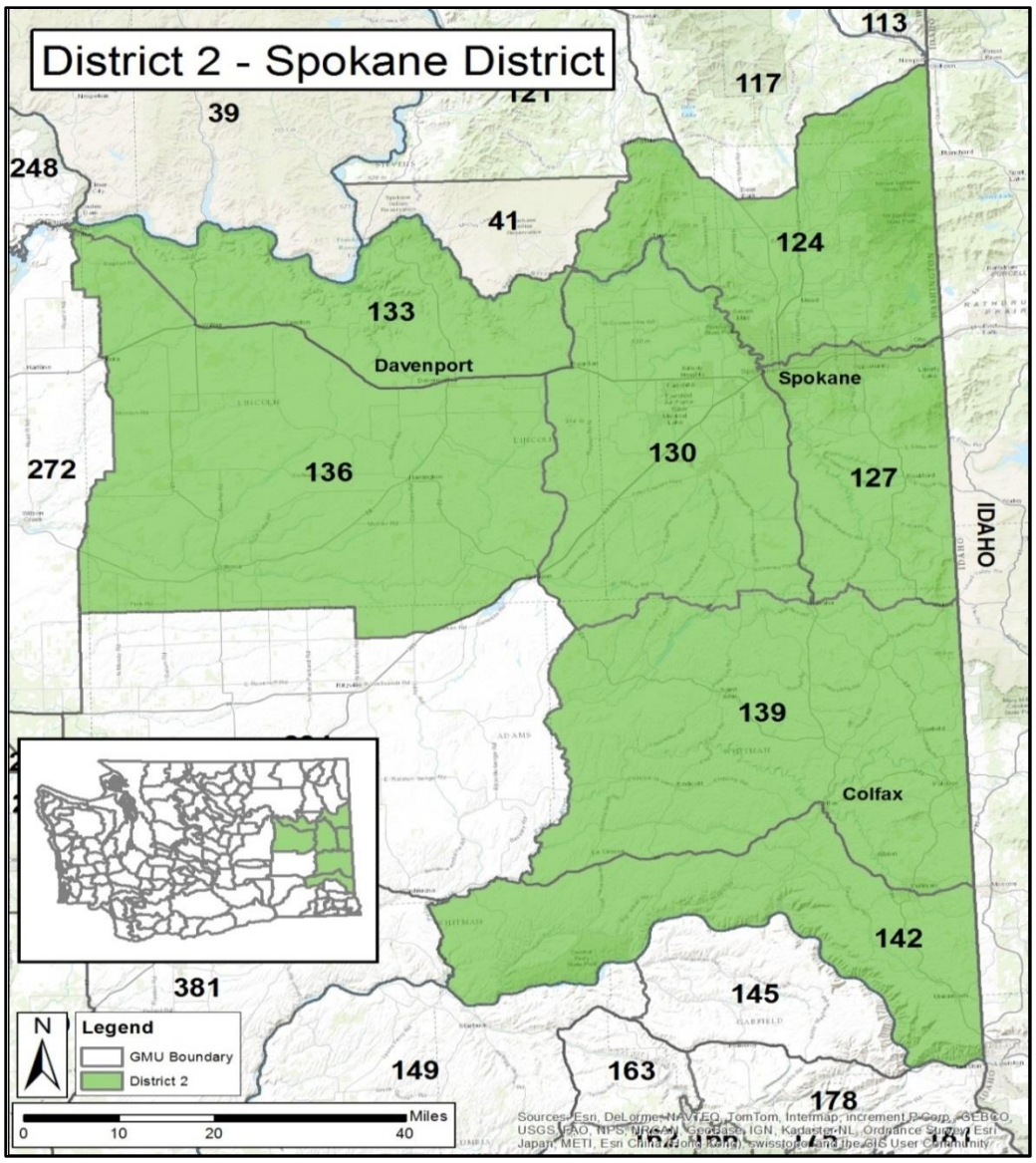

Figure 1. General location and game management units (GMUs) for WDFW District 2.

ELK

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

The Spokane sub-herd of the Selkirk herd makes up the elk population in District 2. The Selkirk herd of Rocky Mountain elk originated in Pend Oreille County and has expanded its range over the last 40 years to this district. As elk habitat in District 2 continues to be lost to agricultural conversion and urban sprawl, our goal is to maintain the population at its current level (roughly 1000–1500 elk) to limit agricultural damage and conflict within urban areas. Consequently, an "any elk" harvest is offered for the general season in all GMUs. The majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, so managing this population requires landowner tolerance and cooperation.

WDFW does not currently make formal population size estimates to monitor elk in most of District 2. Rather, opportunistic surveys, harvest data (Figures 2-5), sightings, and damage complaints are used to indicate population trends. The exception is GMU 130 (Cheney), where the majority of the district's elk harvest (25-50 percent) typically occurs. The Cheney Unit includes Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, which has been regularly surveyed for herd composition for the last 12 years. WDFW's herd composition objective is to maintain a ratio of 15 to 35 bulls per 100 cows pre-hunt and/or 12 to 20 bulls per 100 cows post-hunt. The 2016 pre-hunt aerial survey in GMU 130 found the bull to cow ratio to be above this management objective. Based on the survey, 2016 calf production was the highest it has been since 2008, with a calf to cow ratio of 65 calves per 100 cows. Combined data sources for the entirety of District 2 over the last ten years indicate a stable to slightly increasing population. For more detail on the status of elk in Washington, see WDFW's most recent Game Status and Trend Report. Also newly available is a general how-to guide for elk hunting entitled, "The Basics of Elk Hunting in Washington." You can find this document on the WDFW website here.

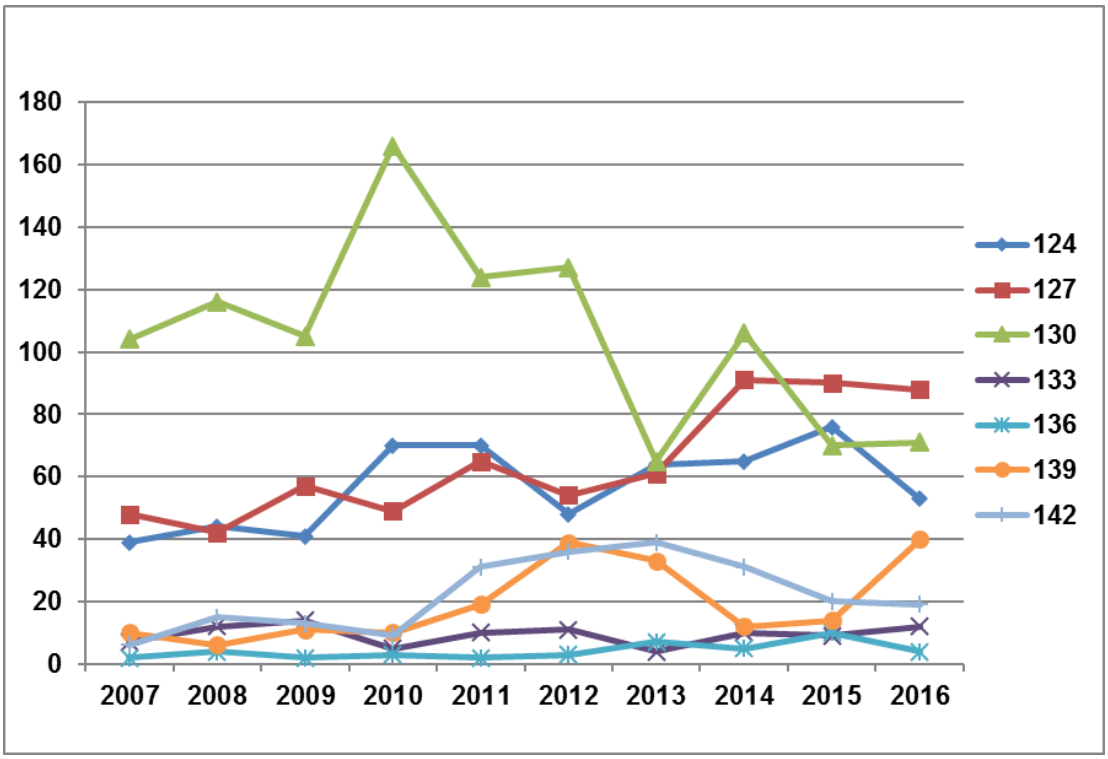

Figure 2. Elk general season total harvest in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

WHICH GMU SHOULD ELK HUNTERS HUNT?

For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm. The highest proportion of the elk harvest consistently occurs in GMUs 124, 127, and 130 (Figure 2). General hunt participants who gain access to private lands in GMUs 127 and 130 have typically had the highest success (Figure 4). In GMU 130, hunters likely benefit from animals moving on and off Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge during the season. With one third of the elk hunters in District 2, GMU 124 (Mount Spokane) sustains the greatest hunting pressure. As a result, overall hunter success is lower there, although the unit often does produce one of the higher harvests of mature bulls (6+ points; Figure 3). Private timber companies, especially Inland Empire Paper (IEP), offer public access in this unit with a paid permit. See Inland Empire Paper Company - Recreational Use for their rules and regulations. Hunters should be aware that motorized access may be limited or closed completely on IEP and other timber company lands due to road conditions or fire danger. Hunters are advised to check closures and restrictions before setting out. IEP access updates can be found online.

Elk in District 2 appear to be expanding into new areas, and harvest in GMUs 139 (Steptoe) and 142 (Almota) has increased over the last five years. Some of these appear to be elk that move back and forth between Idaho and Washington, so timing and access to private lands will be the key to successful elk hunting in these GMUs. Complaints of agricultural damage have been on

the rise, especially in areas where crops have been recently converted to legumes. These scattered groups of 20–100 elk have been reported causing damage in areas including Fairfield south to Tekoa in GMU 127, the area from Dusty east to Palouse, south to Uniontown, and along the Snake River breaks in GMUs 139 and 142, and from the Lincoln/Spokane County border near Tyler north to Long Lake in GMU 130.

For more detailed harvest information, visit:

District 2 - 2016 Game Harvest Statistics:

Elk General Season Harvest

Elk Special Permits Harvest

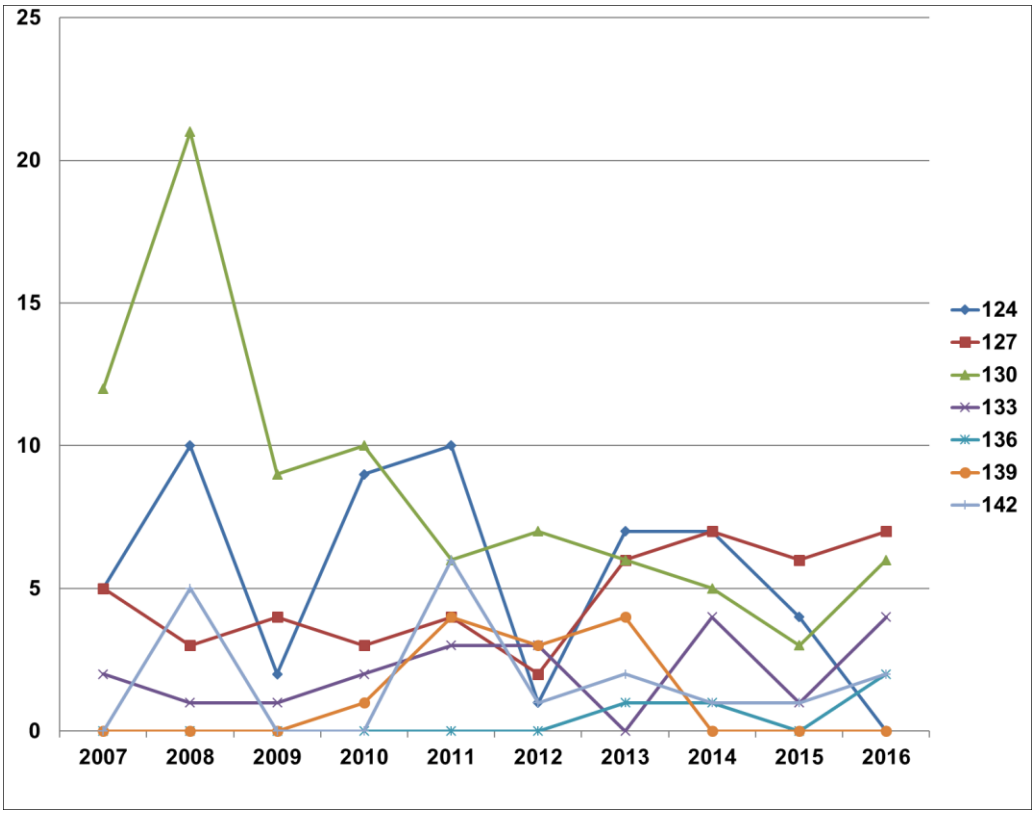

Figure 3. Number of mature bulls (6+ points) harvested by GMU in District 2.

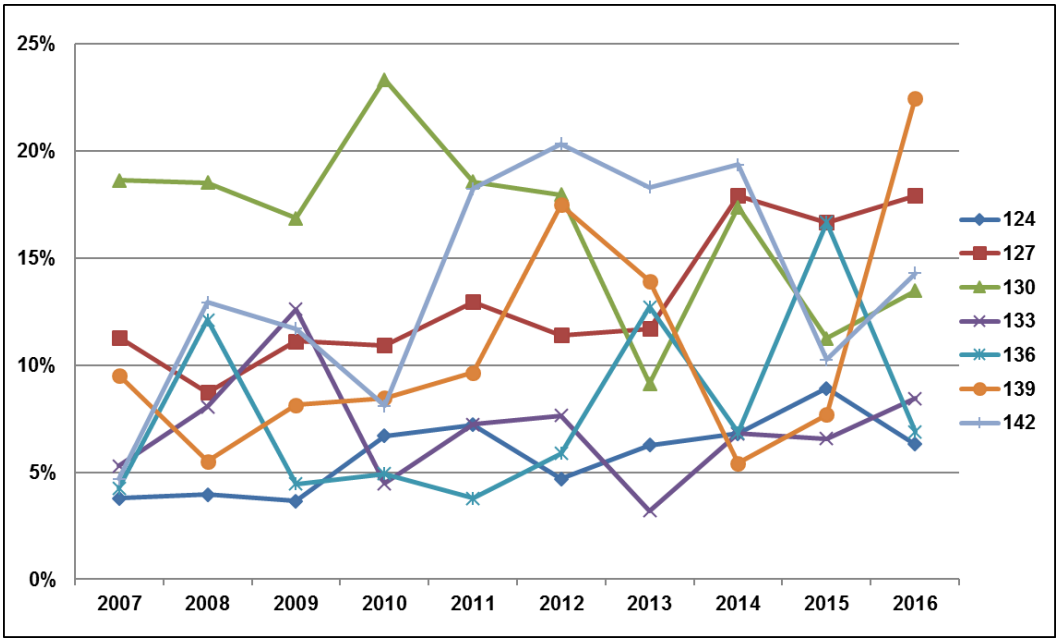

Figure 4. Elk general season hunter success in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

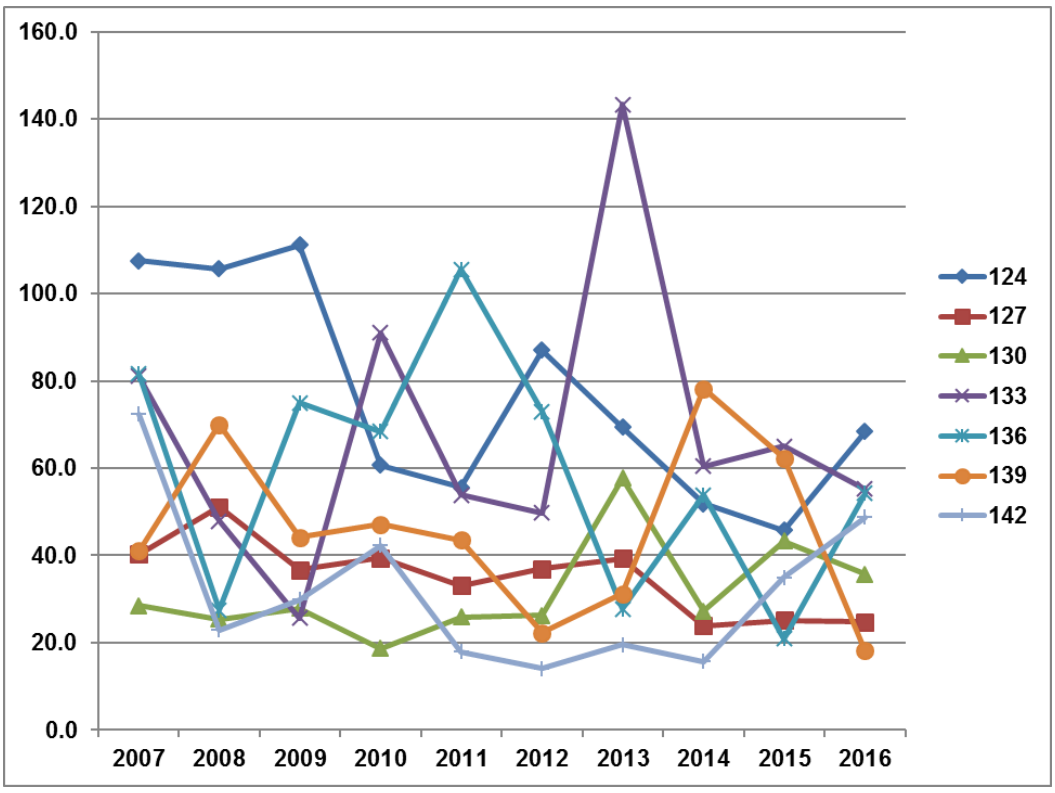

Figure 5. Elk general season hunter effort (days/kill) in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

ELK AREAS

Elk Area 1015 is located within Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Turnbull special permit hunts were created in 2010 to address damage to aspen stands and address complaints from landowners in the area. These are walk-in only hunts, except for Disabled Hunt permit holders. Since inception, one bull permit (any weapon type) and 62 antlerless permits, including each weapon type, Youth, Master Hunter, and Hunters with Disabilities, have been offered. Turnbull hunters averaged 16 percent success for antlerless hunts in 2016, considerably lower than the previous 5-year average of 40 percent. This was primarily driven by low success during the archery hunt (7 percent success on average). Modern firearm hunters were also not successful in 2016. The bull permit was successful the first four years of the hunt, but hasn't been for the last three. For more information about Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, visit Turnbull - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

To address winter property damage in the area, there are also several late season raffle permits and WDFW special permits offered on Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) properties in areas around Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. See the Private Lands Program section for more information on acreage enrolled and the CPWMA website for details on their hunt management.

NOTABLE HUNTING CHANGES

Across all GMUs, elk hunter success during the general season has averaged 10 percent over the last 10 years, and hunter effort (days/kill) has averaged 50 days/kill. These numbers vary widely by GMU (Figures 4–5), as hunter success depends heavily on the work the hunter is willing to put in to obtain access to private property. There are over 100 properties enrolled in WDFW's private land hunting access program in District 2. The majority of these are built around upland game and deer hunting, however some support elk hunting as well, so opportunities exist for elk hunters who do their research. For locations of these properties, visit the GoHunt website.

DEER

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 has both white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*). White-tailed deer are found predominantly in the north and east portions of the district, in the forest/agricultural interface and along riparian corridors. Mule deer are predominantly found in the west and south of the district, in the shrub steppe, scablands, and farm lands.

Deer population levels are closely tied to droughts, severe winters, disease, and land use practices. The primary management objective for white-tailed and mule deer in District 2 is to keep the herds stable to slightly increasing and within landowner tolerance. Given the majority of the land in the district is in private ownership, managing this population without landowner cooperation is impossible. Additional management objectives include maintaining herds at 15–19 bucks per 100 does in the post-hunting season population.

Currently, WDFW does not use formal estimates or indices of population size to manage white-tailed deer populations in District 2. Instead, trends in harvest (Figures 6 and 7), hunter success (Figure 8), days per kill (Figure 9), and pre-hunting season sex and age ratios (Figure 10), are used to monitor populations. WDFW recognizes the limitations of using this data to monitor trends in population size and we are currently evaluating new approaches to monitoring white-tailed deer populations. The harvest statistics above are also used for managing mule deer, however congregations of mule deer on wintering grounds allows for viable post-season aerial surveys to estimate populations periodically. Flights are flown every 3–5 years in conjunction with Districts 4 and 5. Recent flights estimate the mule deer herds in the Washtucna and Odessa areas to be around 13,000 and 11,000 respectively. For more details on the results from these flights, please see the Columbia Basin Mule Deer Management Zone section of the 2016 Game Status and Trend Report.

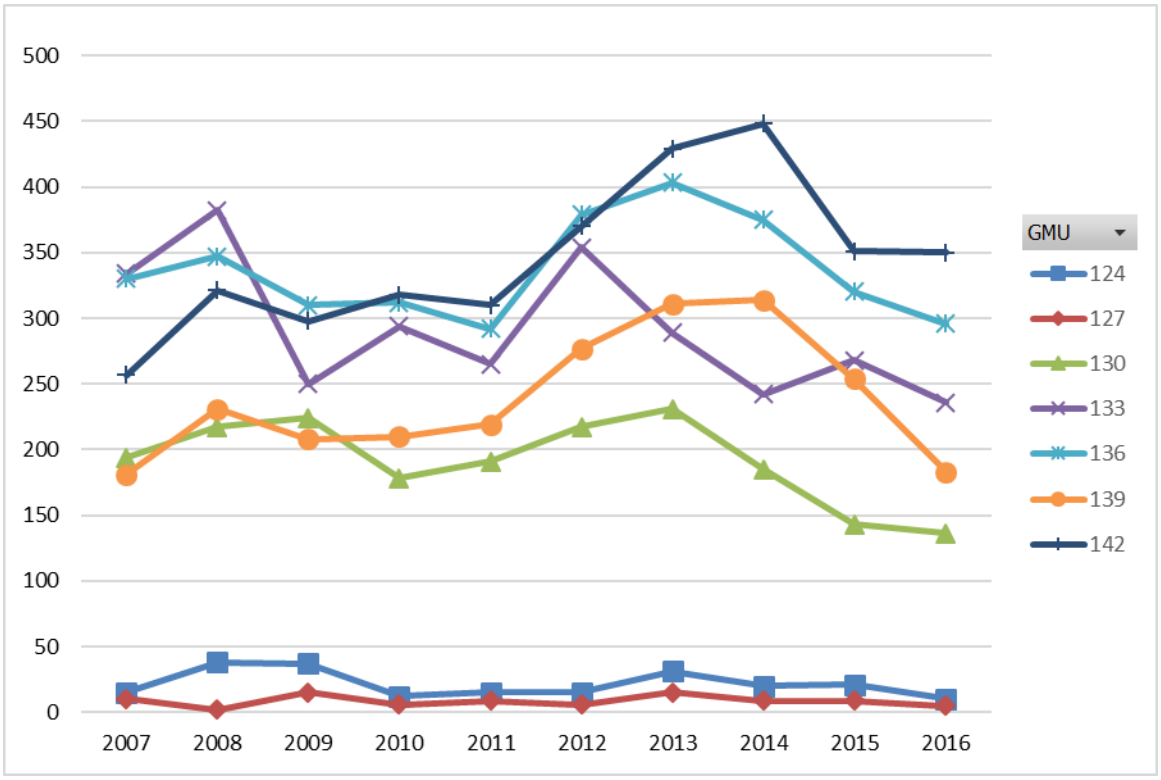

Figure 6. Mule deer general season buck harvest in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

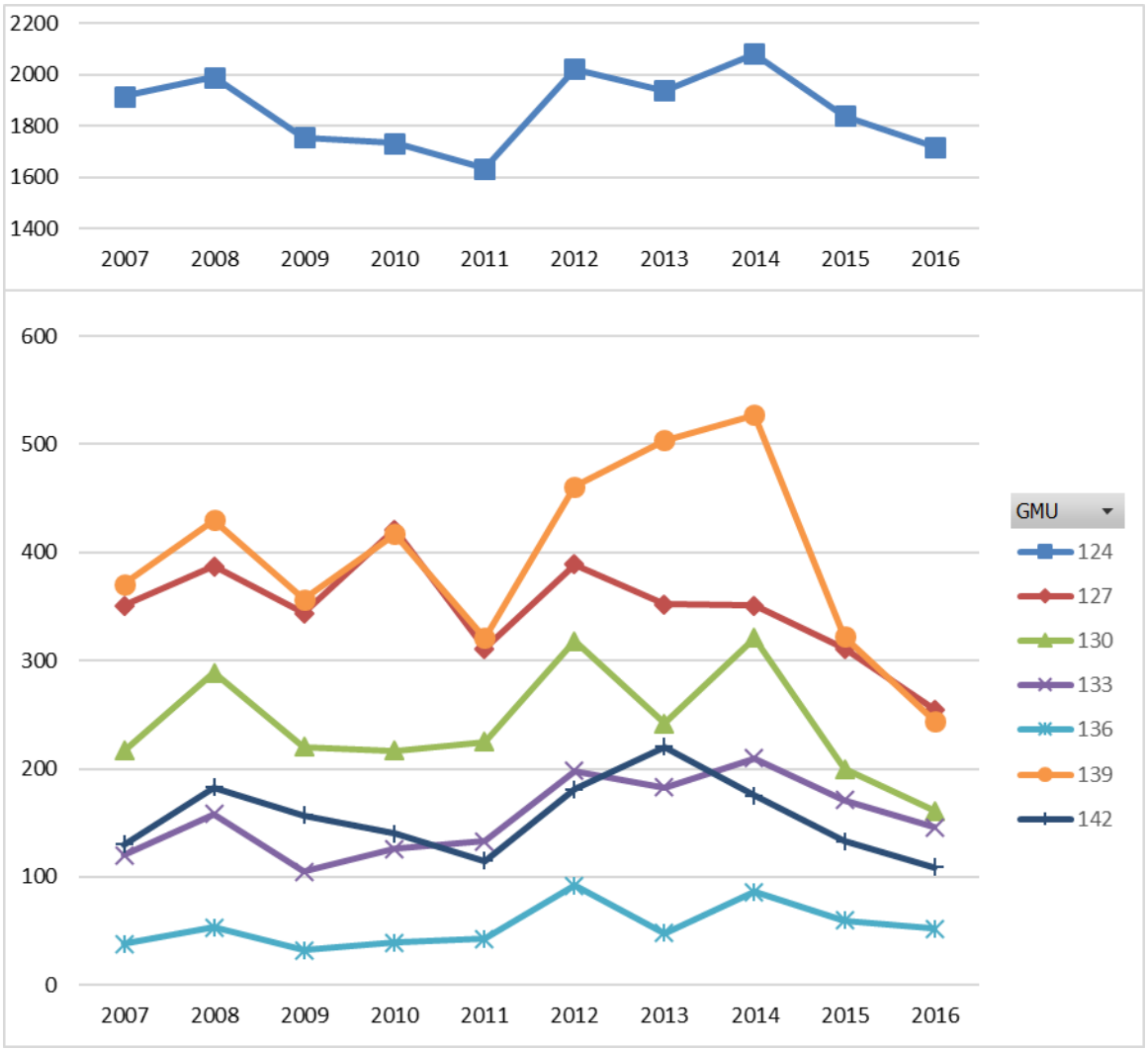

Figure 7. White-tailed deer general season buck harvest in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

Mule deer buck harvest (1216 bucks) was down in 2016 across the district (Figure 6). This represents a 16 percent decline relative to the previous 10-year average. White-tailed deer buck harvest (2687 bucks) was also down in 2016 across the district (Figure 7). This represents a 17 percent decline relative to the previous 10-year average.

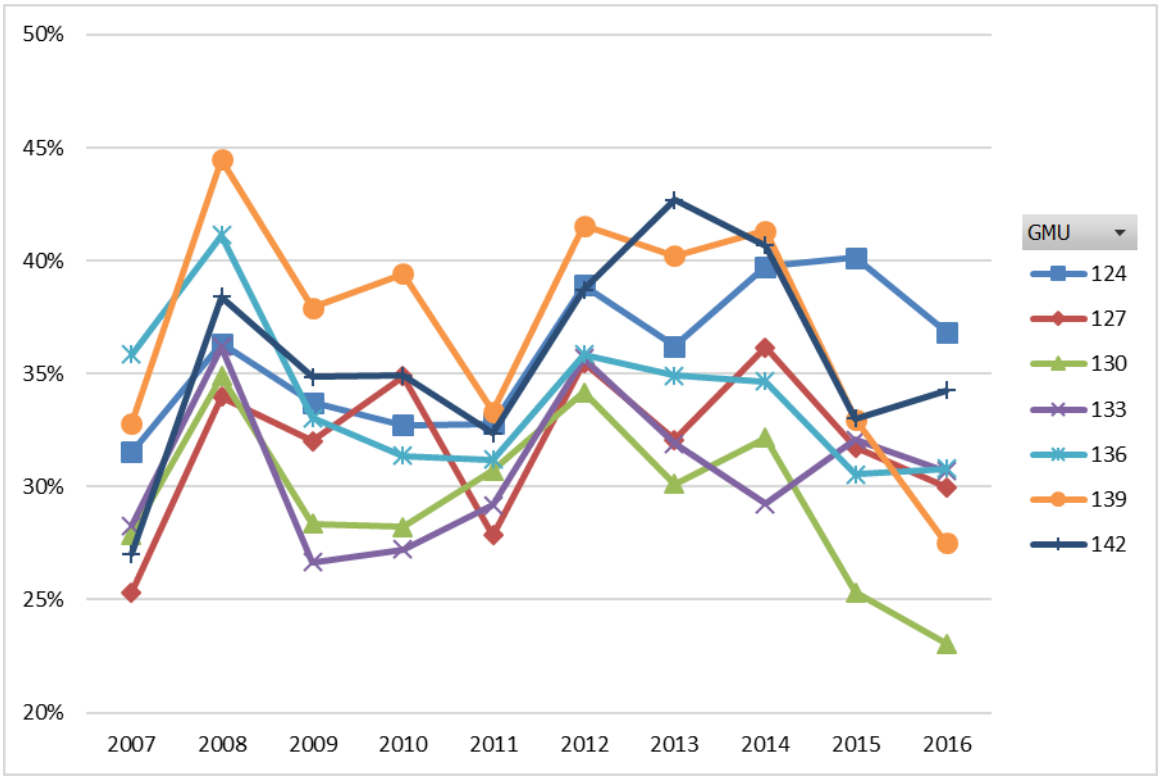

Figure 8. Deer general season hunter success in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

Similar to harvest, hunter success declined in 2016 to an average of 30 percent, a decline of about 8 percent from the previous 10-year average (Figure 8). However, this was driven predominantly by large declines in GMUs 130 and 139, while success in the other five GMUs remained stable relative to the previous 10 years. Hunter effort (days/kill) followed a similar pattern of success with an overall increase in days per kill (15 percent relative to the 10-year average), driven mostly by GMUs 130 and 139 (Figure 9). Pre-season fawn to doe ratios for white-tailed deer have been relatively stable over the past 10 years (Figure 10). However, mule deer fawn to doe ratios have been lower the past three years, likely associated with drought conditions in 2014 and 2015 reducing available forage. Pre-season buck to doe ratios for mule and white-tailed deer have been relatively stable over the past 10 years, averaging 37 mule and 26 white-tailed bucks per 100 does (Figure 10).

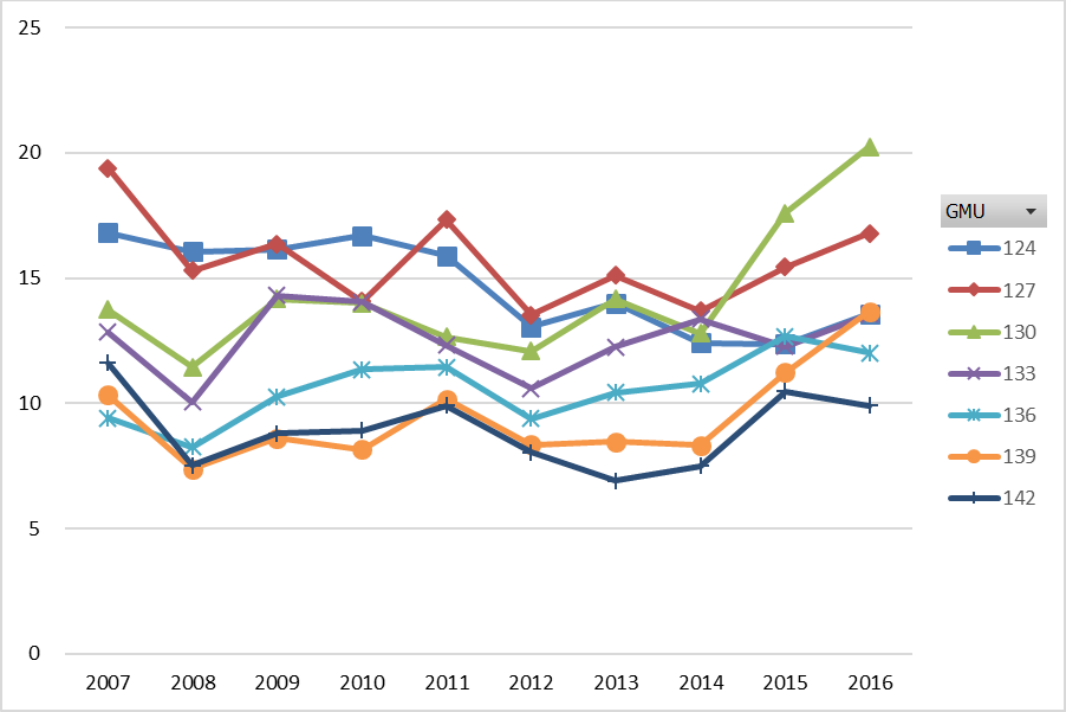

Figure 9. Deer general season days/kill in District 2 by GMU for all weapon types combined.

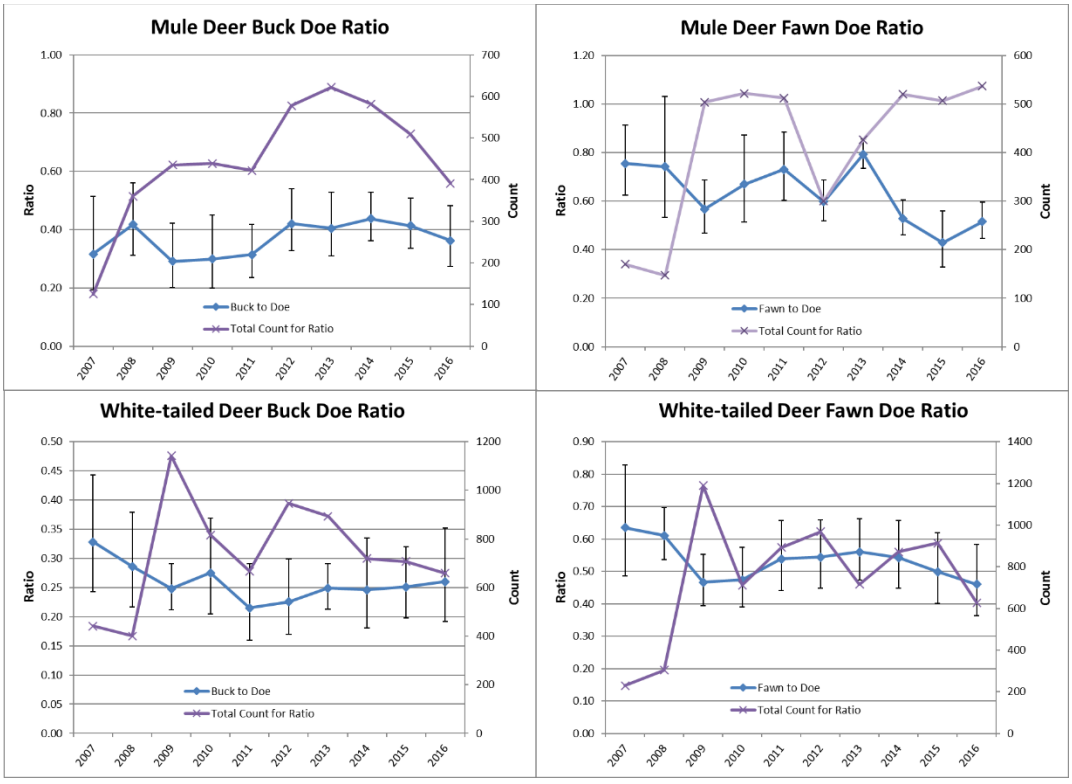

Figure 10. District 2 pre-season buck to doe (August) and fawn to doe (September) ratios (blue lines with 90 percent CI) and total count (purple lines) by species.

The decline in harvest of both species is likely due to a series of events stemming from the 2014 and 2015 droughts. The droughts reduced fawn survival, especially in the mule deer populations in 2015 (Figure 10). The 2015 drought was also a significant factor in the blue tongue outbreak that year which caused high mortality in white-tailed deer. Mule deer are rarely affected by blue tongue, and the 2015 aerial flight in the Benge area estimated the mule deer subpopulation at 12,919, in line with results from previous flights in 2009 and 2011. Additionally, fewer hunters hunted in the district (14 percent decline relative to the 10-year average) and landowners restricted access due to the bluetongue outbreak. Overall, while the white-tailed deer population took a hit in 2015 from blue tongue, but is starting to recover. The mule deer population, while having low fawn recruitment due to drought, is stable.

For more information related to the status of deer in Washington, hunters should read through the most recent version of the Game Status and Trend Report, which is available for download on the WDFW website.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2017 SEASON

Though the white-tailed deer population is starting to rebound from the 2015 blue tongue outbreak hunters should still expect to have to put in more time to be successful (Figure 9). Mule deer numbers appear to be stable, however fawn to doe ratios have been on the low side the past three years. Fewer naïve deer in the population may result in hunters needing to put in more time to be successful.

White-tailed and mule deer hunting opportunities in District 2 vary from marginal to excellent, depending on the GMU and if private land access has been secured. The best opportunities to harvest a white-tailed deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 124 and 127. The best opportunities to harvest a mule deer in District 2 occur in GMUs 136, 139, and 142. For archery hunters, GMUs 124 and 127 provide the best terrain, whereas the terrain in GMUs 136–142 is better suited for muzzleloader and modern firearm.

There is a three-antler-point minimum regulation in GMUs 127–142 for white-tailed deer, and the late white-tailed deer season in GMUs 127–142 is by permit only (the Palouse Special Permit Hunt) as of 2006. Hunter success is, on average, higher for the Palouse hunt (46 percent versus 33 percent in the general season), with 5+ point bucks making up, on average, a greater percentage of the kill (36 percent versus 27 percent in the general season). There are currently 750 permits offered for the Palouse hunt.

Mule and white-tailed deer populations overlap in District 2, so make sure to identify the species before harvesting an animal, since regulations can differ between species within a GMU. The bulk of District 2 is private land, and buck hunters will have to put in the time to get access. Doe hunters should have an easier time given the agricultural nature of this district. We have enrolled many cooperators in our hunter access program in southeast Washington. See the Private Lands Program section below and note that the locations are mapped on the GoHunt website.

For more 2016 harvest information from District 2 visit:

- Deer General Harvest District 2
- Deer Special Permits Harvest District 2

DEER AREAS

There are suburban/rural areas in District 2 where deer congregate and have the potential to cause landscape/property and agricultural damage. To help address this issue, antlerless general season opportunities have been created for youth, senior, and disabled hunters in these areas. Additionally, 975 second tags, half of the district's second tag (doe only) opportunities, are focused in these areas. The remaining 975 second tags are primarily offered in the rural GMUs (133–142) to help address agricultural damage. WDFW deer area locations and boundaries are mapped on the GoHunt website. As noted above, these second tags are focused on private lands dealing with damage and hunters are highly encouraged to secure permission prior to applying for these special permits.

BIGHORN SHEEP

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

District 2 is home to one herd of California bighorn sheep, found in GMU 133 north of Highway 2 in Lincoln County (visit GoHunt for a map). These sheep can most often be seen in the cliffs above the town of Lincoln, as well as in town, and in the cliffs around Whitestone Rock approximately seven miles downstream from Lincoln on Lake Roosevelt. Sheep are also observed frequently in the cliffs and canyons above Sterling Valley (the area between Lincoln and Whitestone) and in surrounding agricultural fields, where they have been reported causing crop damage.

WDFW has conducted regular aerial surveys to assess the status of the Lincoln Cliffs herd since 2002. Minimum population size is estimated by the count of rams and ewes observed during these flights (Figure 10). After several years of increase, the population is showing signs of leveling off, and has likely reached the largest feasible herd size here due to social tolerance and available habitat quantity and quality. For more details on the history of the Lincoln Cliffs herd and the status of bighorn sheep in Washington, see WDFW's 2016 Game Status and Trend Report here.

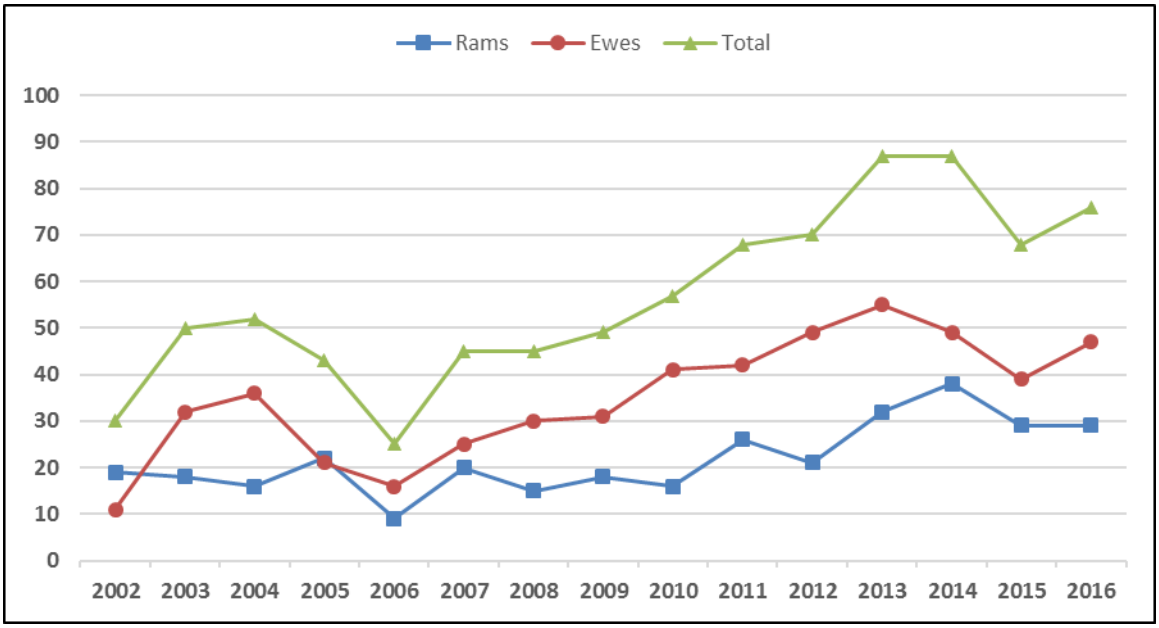

Figure 10. Lincoln Cliffs minimum population estimate by sex for 2002–2016. Estimated as the maximum count from helicopter surveys conducted each year.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2017 SEASON

Bighorn sheep hunting in Washington requires a special permit. One ram permit for the Lincoln Cliffs herd was offered each year from 1997–2013 and was increased to two from 2014 to 2016. Based on age class distribution observed during the 2016 survey, only one ram permit will be issued for the 2017 season. The average number of applicants for this hunt over the last five years is 1,901 and harvest success has remained at 100 percent. The area is almost entirely private property and permittees will need to obtain permission to access these properties for their hunt.

MOOSE

GENERAL INFORMATION, MANAGEMENT GOALS, AND POPULATION STATUS

Moose in northeast Washington are Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*). Moose were not believed to be common or widely distributed in the Rocky Mountain states in the 1800s, and it was not until 1908, when explorer George Shiras III found a fairly large population in Yellowstone National Park, that this mountain race was described. Shiras moose were only rarely noted in Washington until the late 1950s when distribution began to expand into eastern Pend Oreille County. Moose have dramatically increased in numbers and distribution in the last couple of decades and are now relatively common throughout northeast Washington.

Statewide moose management goals are to: 1) Preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage moose and their habitats to ensure healthy productive populations; 2) Manage for a variety of

recreational, educational, and aesthetic purposes; and 3) Manage statewide moose populations for a sustained yield. The proximity of an expanding moose population near the Spokane metropolitan area adds the challenge of balancing population objectives with human safety and the community's tolerance of moose.

Currently, WDFW uses harvest metrics to monitor and manage moose populations in District 2. From 2002 to 2012, annual winter aerial surveys were flown by district biologists covering a sub-sample of each hunt unit in District 2. General trends in observed moose during aerial survey flights indicate a stable to growing population in each area. However, there was large variability in the observed count between years and the methodology was not successful in producing reliable population estimates. In 2013, WDFW began work on developing a new survey methodology that would produce reliable population estimates over the entire northeast (GMUS 101–130), but results in lower coverage of individual units.

Harvest management emphasizes quality hunting opportunities through a limited entry permit process. A total of 61 permits are offered in District 2 in a variety of categories (Table 1). Prior to 2012, District 2 had two moose hunt units (MHU), Mount Spokane (GMU 124 east of Highway 395) and Hangman (GMUs 127 and 130). In 2012, the Mount Spokane MHU was split into Mount Spokane North and Mount Spokane South (maps found here) to help distribute hunters more evenly across the area and increase hunter opportunity. In 2015, the Hangman MHU was split into the Mica Peak (GMU 127) and Cheney (GMU 130) MHUs for antlerless hunts only, a result of the vast majority of hunters hunting only in Mica Peak while complaints of moose in Cheney increased. Additionally, in 2015, the Spokane West Moose MHU was split off of the Huckleberry MHU to distribute hunters and increase opportunity.

Table 1. Permits offered in District 2 by moose hunt unit for 2017.

	Any Moose	Antlerless Only		
Moose Unit	General	General	Disabled	Youth
Mount Spokane North	8	7	1	8
Mount Spokane South	8	8	0	8
Spokane West	1	2	0	0
Hangman	4	0	0	0
Mica Peak	0	4	0	0
Cheney	0	2	0	0

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE 2017 SEASON

Hunters should take note that moose are by nature a solitary animal and are scattered over very wide areas as individuals or in small groups. While they can be found at any elevation, they are most likely found between 3,000 and 5,000 feet. In the fall they are looking for deciduous

browse, primarily willow brush, serviceberry, ceonothus, and other shrubs in clear-cuts or burns 7–15 years old. Moose seek out the cooler, moist drainage basins and slopes. North slopes or east flowing drainage basins are generally preferred. Moose are still in the rut in early October and some hunters have been effective with calls. By November, snow is common and locating moose tracks and seeing these dark animals with a snow background is much easier. However, by mid to late November, there is usually enough snow that motor vehicle access can be limited. Experience shows that moose seek out snow rather than avoid it in late fall and early winter. In years without much snow, they are found right around the top of the mountains. In years with a lot of snow, they move down to the foothill band around the mountains. Moose habitat in the district is largely located on private timber company lands, but smaller private ownerships can also harbor good moose concentrations. Permit holders should exercise caution and know where they and the targeted moose are at all times given the percentage of private land ownership, proximity to Idaho, and non-hunting lands (state & county parks, national wildlife refuge) within the moose hunting units. WDFW requests all successful moose hunters to submit tooth samples in the envelopes provided with their informational packet. Tooth samples allow us to get an overview of the age structure of the moose population, which will help inform future management decisions.

See below for specific harvest metrics for each MHU and check out the Moose Hunting in Eastern Washington document online for more details about access and moose distribution in individual MHUs.

Mount Spokane North Moose Hunt Unit

Success rate for the Any Moose hunt in this unit was 86 percent in 2016 and has averaged 95 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have on average spent five days per kill, but spent seven days per kill in 2015 and 2016. The average spread of bulls harvested is 36 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 48 inches. Success rates for all Antlerless Only hunts combined in this unit was 71 percent in 2016 and has averaged 86 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters have on average spent six days per kill, but spent eight days per kill in 2015 and 2016. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears stable, however, decreasing success rates and increasing effort are a concern. Additionally, an ongoing study in the area indicates low pregnancy rates and low calf survival. Aerial surveys are planned for this coming winter, and along with the information from the above sources, will be used to assess if permit adjustments are needed.

Mount Spokane South Moose Hunt Unit

Success rate for the Any Moose hunt in this unit was 86 percent in 2016 and has averaged 94 percent since its creation in 2012. Hunters spent on average five days per kill in 2016, which is the average for this hunt since its creation. The average spread of bulls harvested is 34 inches, with the largest bull harvested measuring 46 inches. Success rates for all Antlerless Only hunts

combined in this unit was 85 percent in 2016 and have averaged 88 percent since creation in 2012. Hunters spent on average five days per kill in 2016, which is the average for this hunt since its creation. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears stable, but decreasing success rates and increasing effort are a concern. Additionally, an ongoing study in the area indicates low pregnancy rates and low calf survival. Aerial surveys are planned for this coming winter, and along with the information from the above sources, will be used to assess if permit adjustments are needed.

Spokane West Moose Hunt Unit

This MHU was split off from the Huckleberry MHU in 2015, so there is little historic data for comparison. The 2015 Any Moose permittee successfully harvested a 32-inch bull in one day of hunting. The 2016 Any Moose permittee successfully harvested a 44-inch bull in five days. The two Antlerless permittees in 2015 were both successful, spending on average two days hunting. The two Antlerless permittees in 2016 were also both successful. One hunter hunted only one day while the other hunter spent 18 days hunting. Aerial surveys are planned for this coming winter and hopefully will supply a better understanding of the moose population in this area.

Hangman Moose Hunt Unit

Success rate for the Any Moose hunt in this unit was 86 percent in 2016, which is similar to the previous 5-year average of 88 percent, but low when compared to the 100 percent success rate seen from 2001–2010 (first 10 years of this hunt). Hunters spent 20 days per kill on average in 2016 (ranging 1–38 days), almost four times the previous 5-year average of six days per kill. The average spread of bulls harvested in the last 10 years is 37 inches, with the largest bull ever harvested measuring 52 inches. Average spread of the bulls harvested in 2016 was 40 inches and ranged from 37–42 inches. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper Company), but increasing in areas closed to hunting or where access is limited (Conservation Areas and suburban Spokane). Hunters are strongly encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt prior to applying.

Mica Peak Moose Hunt Unit

There are no Any Moose permits specific to just this unit (Hangman MHU incorporates both Mica Peak and Cheney MHUs). The following Antlerless harvest statistics include the Hangman Unit data because the vast majority of permittees prior to 2015 harvested their animals in Mica Peak. The success rate for Antlerless Only hunts was 86 percent in 2016, up from the previous 5-year average of 72 percent. Hunters spent on average six days per kill in 2016, only slightly more than the previous 10-year average of five days and significantly less than the 2015 average of 14. Overall, the moose population in this unit appears to be declining in areas open to general hunting access (e.g., DNR and Inland Empire Paper Company), but increasing in areas closed to

hunting or where access is limited. Hunters are encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt if they want to increase their odds of success.

Cheney Moose Hunt Unit

This MHU was split off from the Hangman MHU in 2015 because very few permittees hunted it while the number of complaints regarding moose in the unit's suburban/rural areas increased. This unit is almost entirely private land, the larger blocks of public land are NOT open to hunting, and the moose are dispersed and highly mobile. Only one of the two Antlerless Only permittees reported for this hunt in 2015. The permittee was successful after 15 days of hunting. Though we were not able to contact the other permittee to confirm, we believe the hunt was unsuccessful based on conversations with the permittee prior to the close of the season. In 2016, neither permittee was successful after spending a combined 20 days hunting. Hunters are STRONGLY encouraged to secure private land access for this hunt prior to applying for the permit.

District 2 also has a Master Hunter Only Coordinated Damage Hunt. WDFW Enforcement coordinates this hunt and we currently offer 10 permits. However, the opportunity to hunt under this permit depends on moose conflict situations that occur in an area that is also safe for harvest. Over the eight years of this hunt's existence, there have been only a handful of moose harvested. If you are successfully drawn for this hunt, DO NOT purchase the license and tag until you have been contacted by WDFW Enforcement.

WATERFOWL

At the statewide level, District 2 is not known for its duck hunting and is not a large duck production area due to the ephemeral nature of the water bodies in the Channeled Scablands. Local surveys indicate brood production was up in 2016, with more duck and coot broods seen than in the previous eight years (Figure 12). The most common breeding duck species in the area are mallard, gadwall, and redhead. Other common waterfowl species in District 2 include coots, ruddy duck, and all three teal species. Based on breeding population surveys (BPOP), duck numbers overall appear to be increasing in the Potholes region of eastern Washington, though they were down in 2016 (Figure 13). Given the limited number of local nesting ducks, the waterfowl hunting opportunity in this district is dependent upon the number of migrants coming from Canada and Alaska, the amount of summer and fall precipitation, and how long waterbodies remain ice-free. Hunters should focus their efforts on larger perennial waterbodies unless fall rains are significant when shallow, flooded agricultural fields become duck and geese hot spots. For more information on waterfowl hunting techniques and waterfowl hunting areas in Region 1, see the WDFW waterfowl webpage.

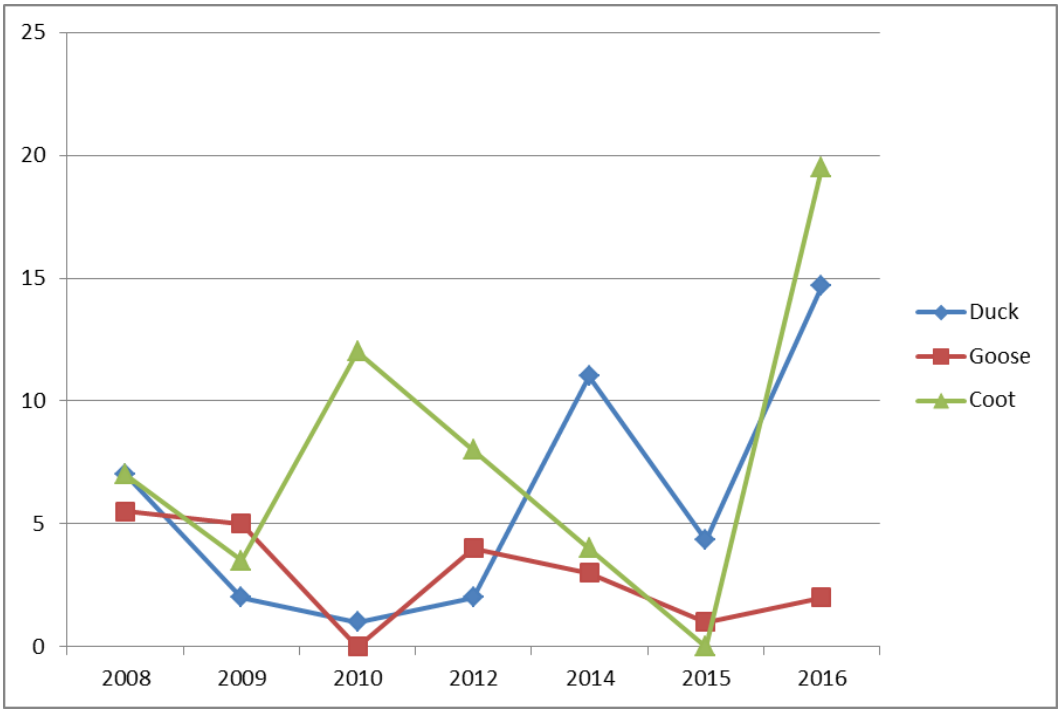

Figure 12. Average number of broods observed per route for District 2 brood production ground surveys.

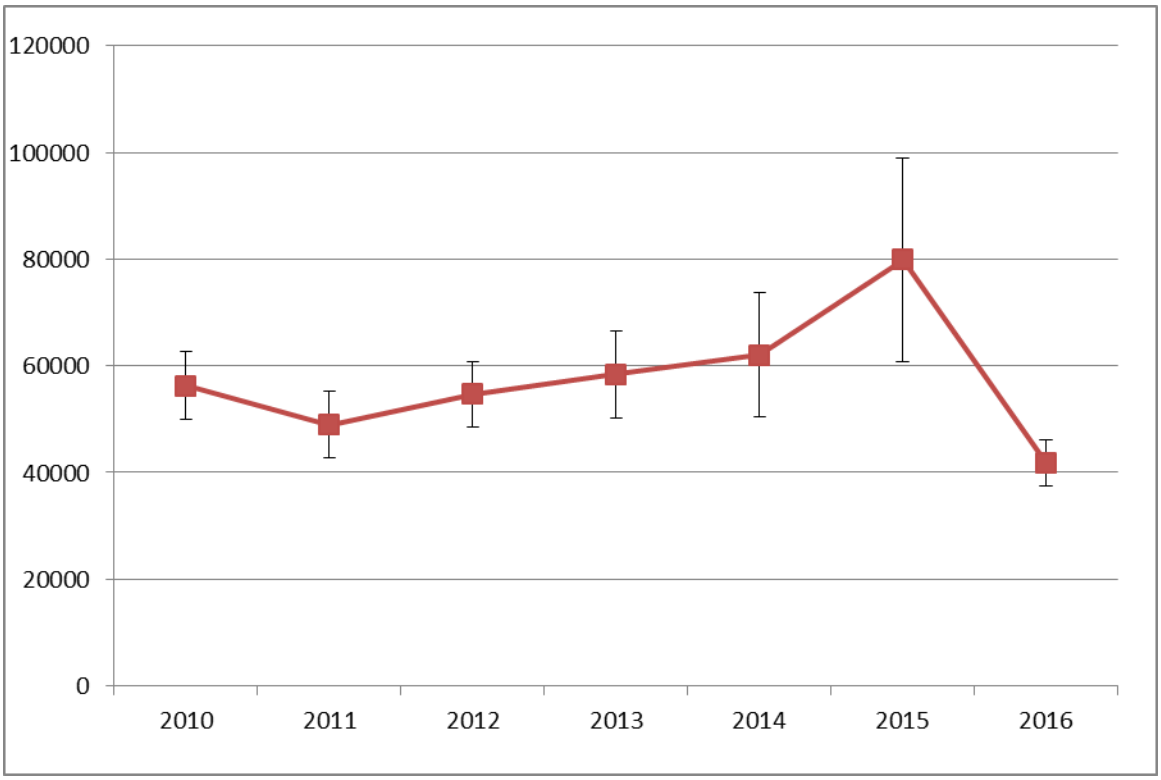

Figure 13. Total duck estimates from breeding population surveys for the Potholes region of eastern Washington.

PHEASANT

Spring pheasant count surveys were not conducted in 2017, however pheasant count surveys in Whitman County were 26 percent lower in 2016 than the previous five-year average (Figure 14). High precipitation this spring should have helped with forage for broods although the rains may have resulted in early brood loss, as young chicks have poor thermoregulation and will typically die if they are soaked. District-wide trends in harvest continue to decline, while hunter numbers appear to have stabilized (Figure 15, top), mirroring statewide trends. Days per hunter has remained fairly stable in the district, while harvest per hunter has generally declined (Figure 15, bottom). The majority of pheasant hunting occurs in Whitman County, which has about three times the harvest and about two times more hunters than Lincoln or Spokane counties. Overall, pheasant populations in the district should remain relatively stable this year, but are experiencing long term declines. This is a trend seen across the country, and though the cause of the decline in pheasant populations in Washington is undefined, it likely results from several causes associated with current farming practices and habitat loss.

For more information on harvest statistics see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Pheasant - Statewide and by County. For more information on pheasant status in Washington, see the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

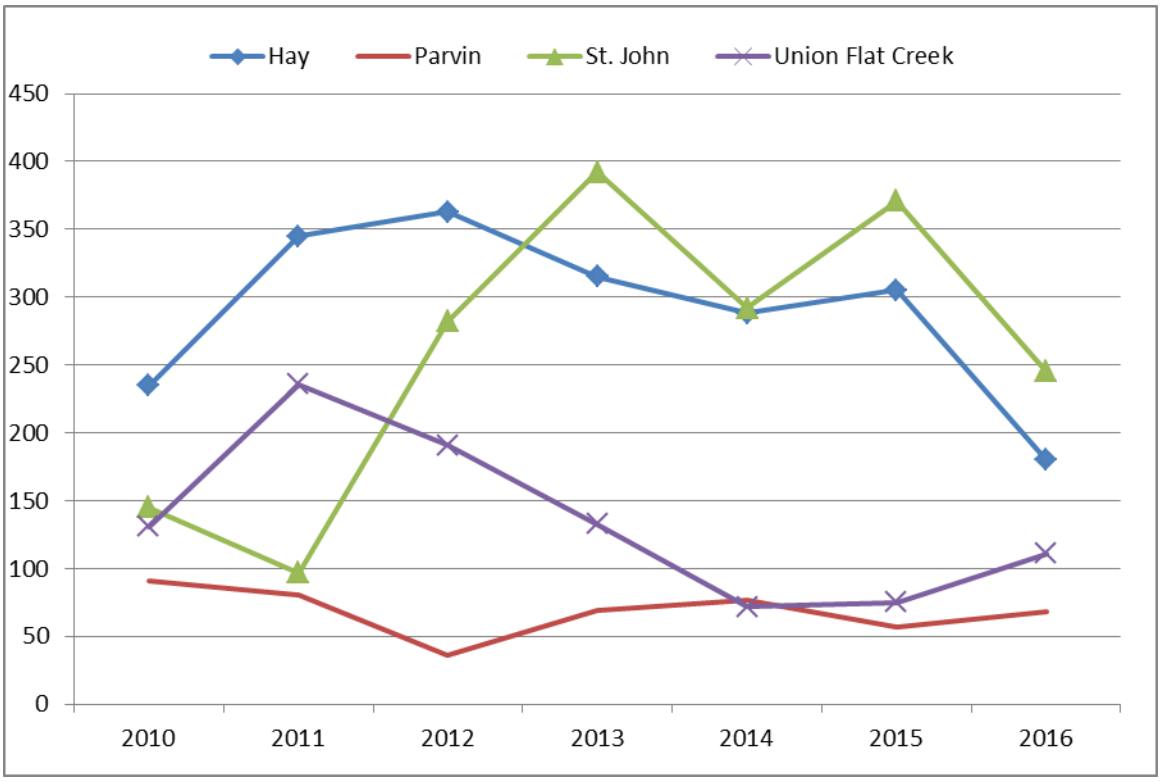

Figure 14. Maximum count from pheasant crow routes in District 2 from 2010–2016.

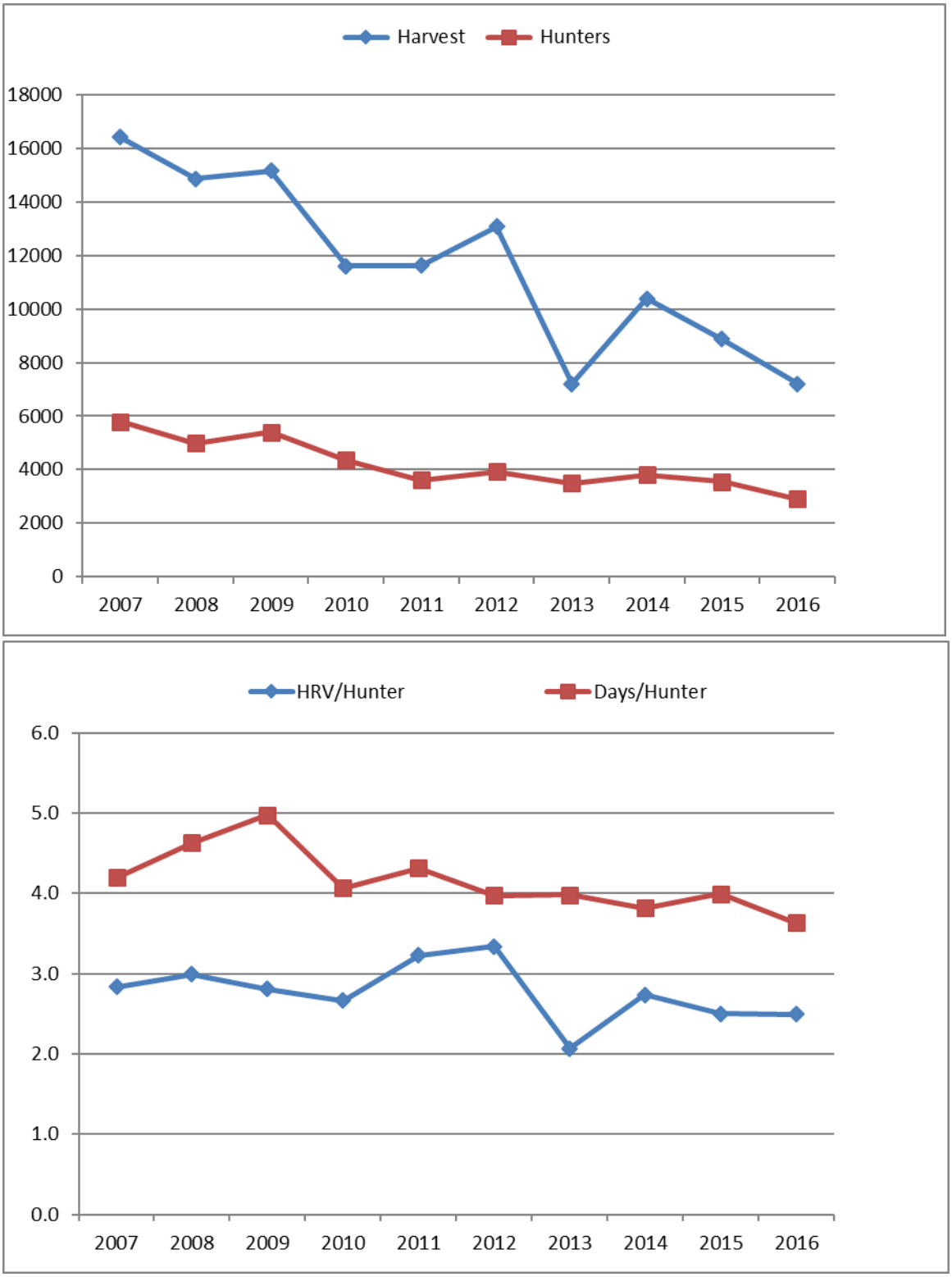

Figure 15. Top graph: Pheasant harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2007–2016. Bottom graph: Pheasant harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2007–2016.

Since most of the land in this district is private, hunters will need to spend some time knocking on doors to get access to the better sites. See the Private Lands Program section below for private land access program acres by GMU. Many cooperators have enrolled in WDFW hunter access programs recently in southeast Washington. The locations are mapped on the GoHunt website. For tips on pheasant hunting in general, see the new "Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington" publication available on the WDFW website here.

WDFW will also be releasing game farm produced roosters once again this fall at the traditional release sites, which are also mapped on the GoHunt website and the Eastern Washington Pheasant Enhancement Program publication. For more detailed harvest information, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Pheasant - Statewide and by County.

CHUKAR AND GRAY PARTRIDGE

Nest and early chick survival for chukar and partridge should be good this year if broods survived the spring showers. The warm summer should increase forage and help with brood survival and recruitment. Harvest has been fairly stable over the past nine years except for the spike in 2012, averaging 1750 birds a year (Figure 16). Harvest in 2016 was 1292, slightly down relative to the long-term average. Hunter numbers, effort (days per hunter), and harvest per hunter remain stable overall (Figure 16).

Partridge broods of 10-12 chicks have been seen regularly during field work in Lincoln County, but not as many as in 2015. Partridge are most common in Lincoln and Whitman counties and are most often seen in and adjacent to agricultural fields.

There are very few chukar in District 2. They are predominantly found along the breaks of the Snake River. Terrain is steep and rocky with limited public access from above. There is some access via U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along the Snake River from below, but not all of the Corps lands allow hunting. See their website for details.

For more information on gray partridge and chukar, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report. For tips on chukar and gray partridge hunting in general, see the new "Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington" publication available on the WDFW website here.

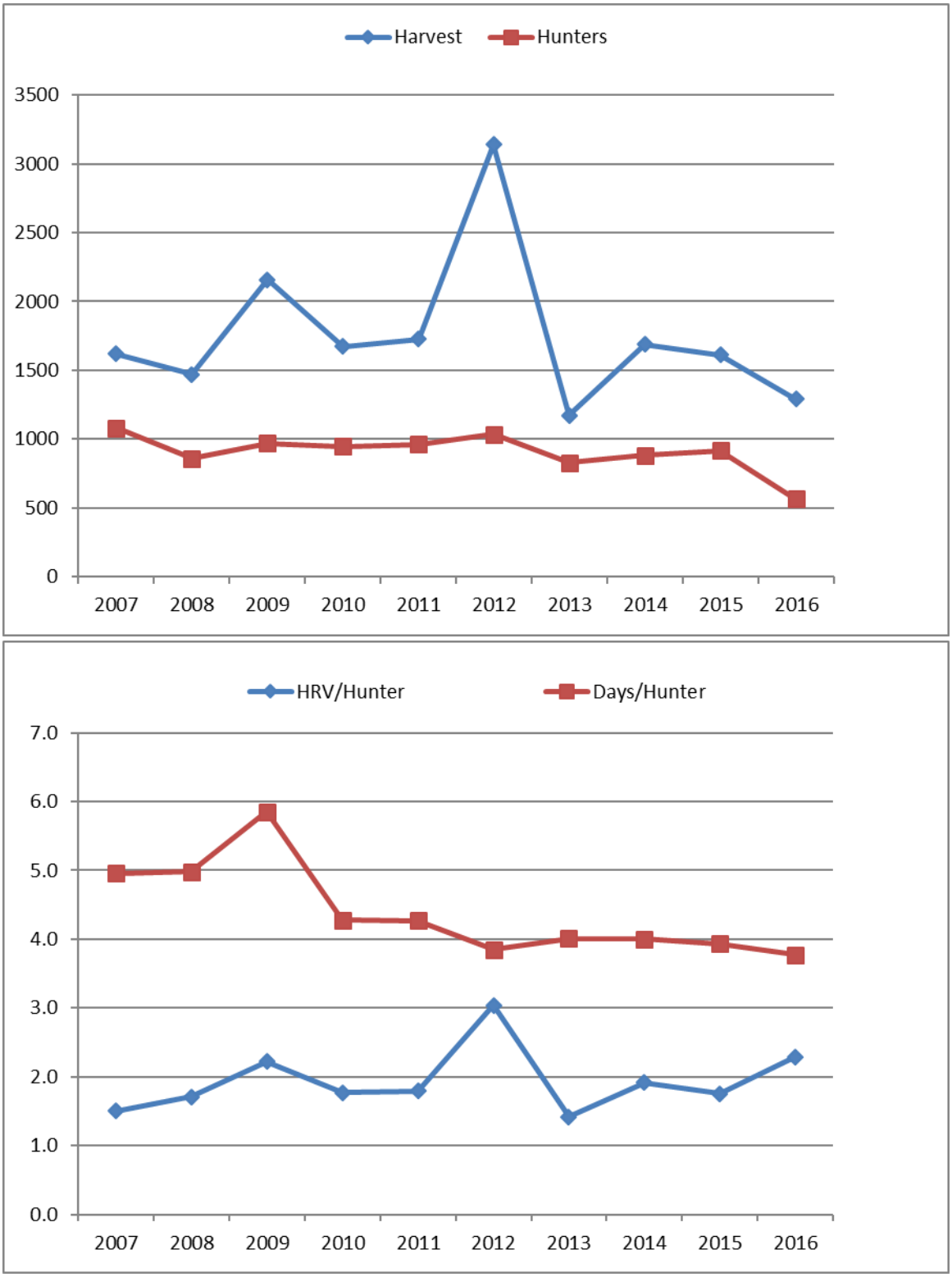

Figure 16. Top graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2007–2016. Bottom graph: Chukar and partridge harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2007–2016.

FOREST GROUSE

Populations overall appear to be low, but stable in District 2, with the best success found in the forested portions of GMUs 124, 127, and 133. Of the four forest grouse species, only ruffed and dusky grouse are found in District 2. Ruffed are by far the most common of the two, but dusky can be found in GMUs 124, 127, and 133. The wet spring and warm summer should combine to produce good nest and brood success if hens were able to keep chicks dry during those critical first couple weeks following hatch. Harvest and hunter numbers are down relative to long term averages, but have been relatively stable the past five years (Figure 17, top). Hunter effort remains stable at about five days per hunter, while hunter success (harvest per hunter) has been on the rise (Figure 17, bottom).

For more information on forest grouse, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Statewide and by County, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report. For tips on grouse hunting in general, see the new "Basics of Upland Bird Hunting in Washington" publication available on the WDFW website here.

To evaluate population trends and harvest changes, WDFW began collecting forest grouse wings and tails from hunters in 2016 and will continue in 2017. Collection barrels will be distributed at various hunting access points as well as WDFW offices throughout Region 1. You can help with this effort by dropping off a wing and tail from each forest grouse you harvest, following the instructions at the barrel. Locations of wing barrels and other information about this sampling effort can be found here.

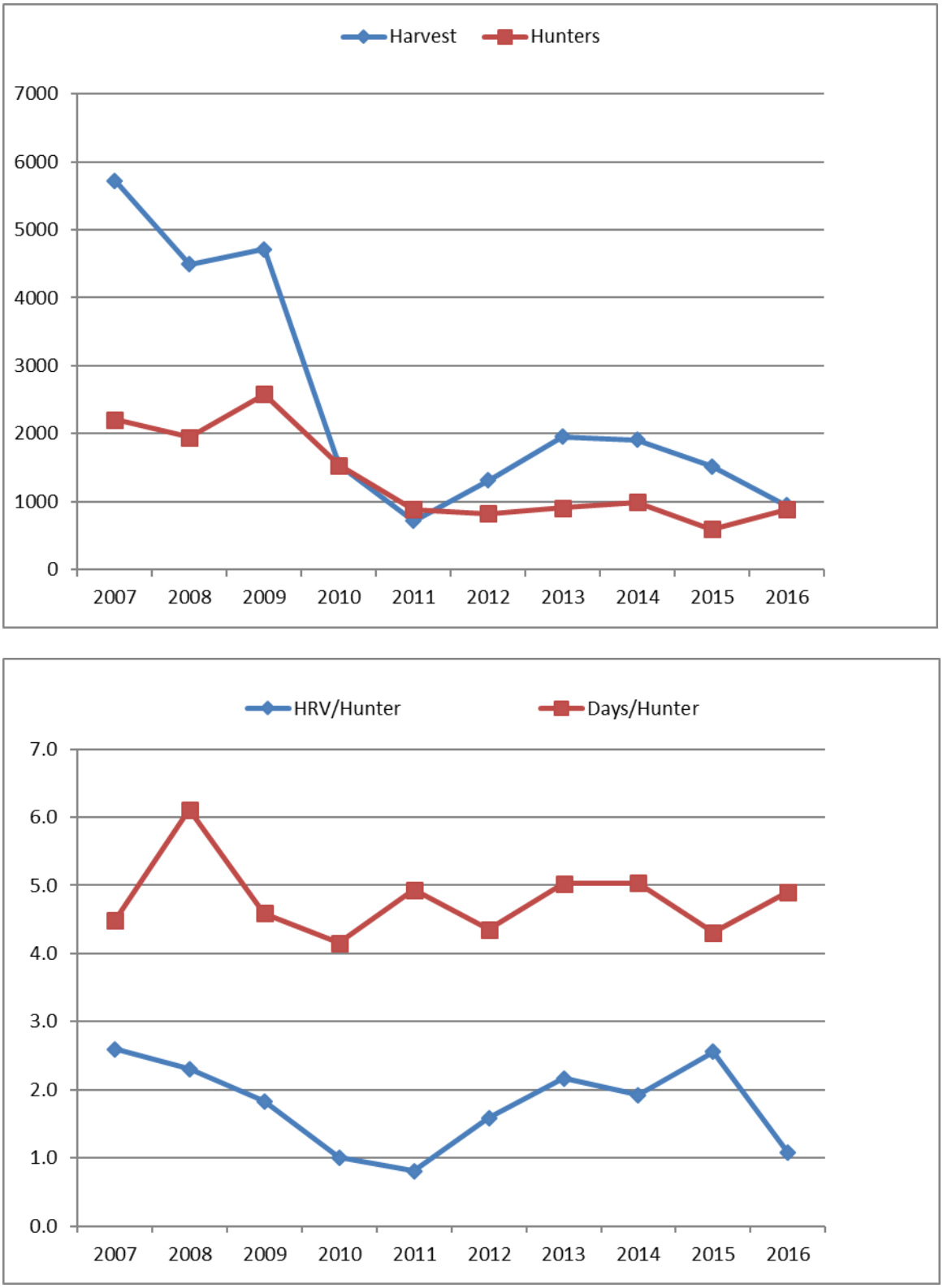

Figure 17. Top graph: Forest grouse harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2007–2016. Bottom graph: Forest grouse harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2007–2016.

QUAIL

The wet spring and warm summer should combine to produce good nest and brood success, with increased recruitment into the population if hens were able to keep chicks dry during those critical first couple weeks following hatch. All harvest metrics show a long term negative trend, but for the past five years they have been stable (Figure 18), indicating a relatively stable population. Access can be a problem, especially with most of the good quail habitat occurring in and around farmsteads and towns. For more information on harvest statistics, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: Quail - Statewide and by County. For more information on quail status in Washington, see the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

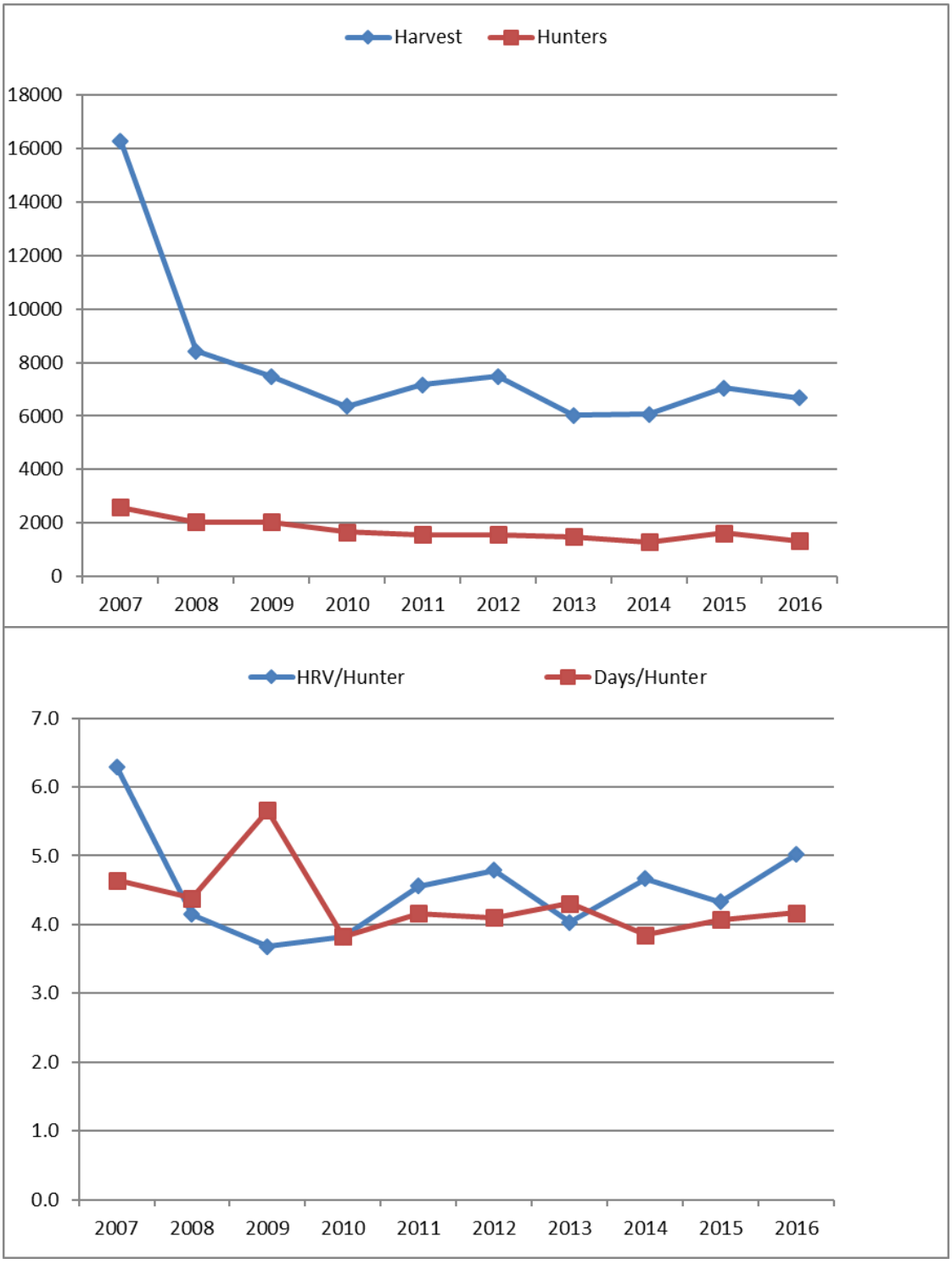

Figure 18. Top graph: Quail harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2007–2016. Bottom graph: Quail harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2007–2016.

TURKEY

Opportunistic observations during field work, public reports, and damage claims all indicate that the turkey population is doing very well in GMUs 124–133 and expanding in GMUs 136–142. This corresponds with an increase in harvest in the district (Figure 19). GMU 124 saw the most harvest by far, with 1185 birds taken in 2016. GMUs 130 and 133 come in second and third, with 505 and 414 birds harvested, respectively. GMU 127 had 200 harvested, and GMUs 136–142 had less than 120 birds harvested combined in 2016. Hunter success was 56 percent in 2016, a 47 percent increase over the previous five-year average. While hunter success is up and harvest has been trending up, hunter numbers while growing through 2014 have showed decline the past two years (Figure 19).

Again, the district is predominantly private land and hunters will need to secure access. Access during the spring hunt can be competitive, but access should be relatively easy to acquire in GMU 124 for the fall hen seasons, given the extensive turkey damage complaints the department has received from this area.

For more information on turkey in Washington, see the Turkey Game Harvest Statistics and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

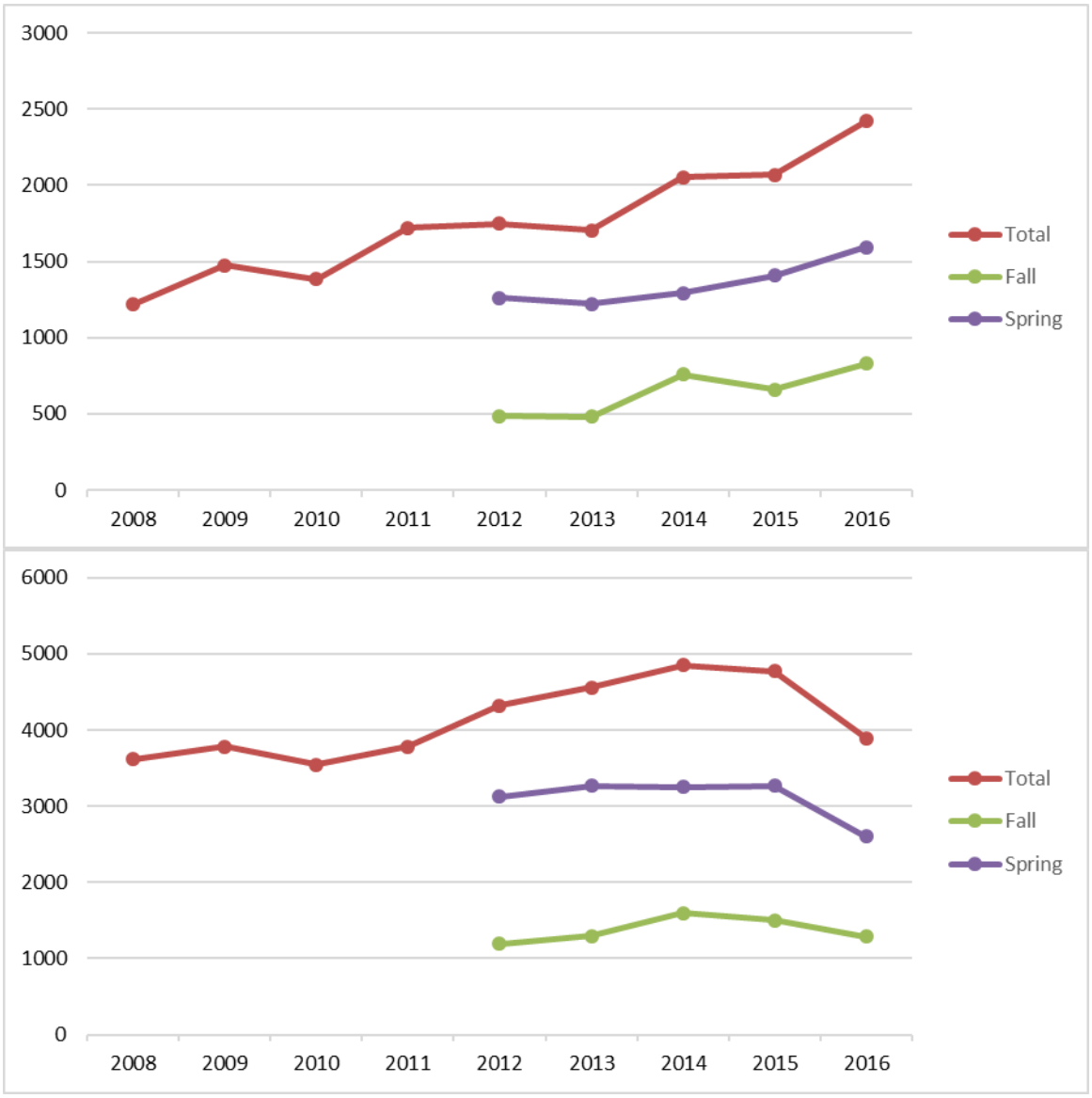

Figure 19. Top graph: Turkey harvest (spring, fall, & total) for District 2 from 2008–2016. Bottom graph: Turkey hunters (spring, fall, & total) for District 2 from 2008–2016.

DOVE

Doves in District 2 occur at low population densities relative to the Columbia Basin and similar regions. As often as not, cool temperatures just prior to or during the dove season push many doves further south out of the district. Hunter harvest metrics have been highly variable, but indicate a relatively stable population (Figure 20), with harvest averaging about 3000 birds a year by about 300 hunters. Hunter effort (days per hunter) has been slowly increasing the past ten years, while harvest per hunter shows high annual variation (Figure 20). It is important to note that eastside hunters have an additional dove opportunity – the Eurasian collared dove. This dove is an exotic dove that has invaded most of eastern Washington and can be hunted and trapped with a license all year round. Eurasian collared doves are commonly found in and around towns and around grain elevators.

For more information on doves, see the Statewide Small Game Harvest Statistics: 2015 Statewide and by County, and the most recent Game Status and Trend Report.

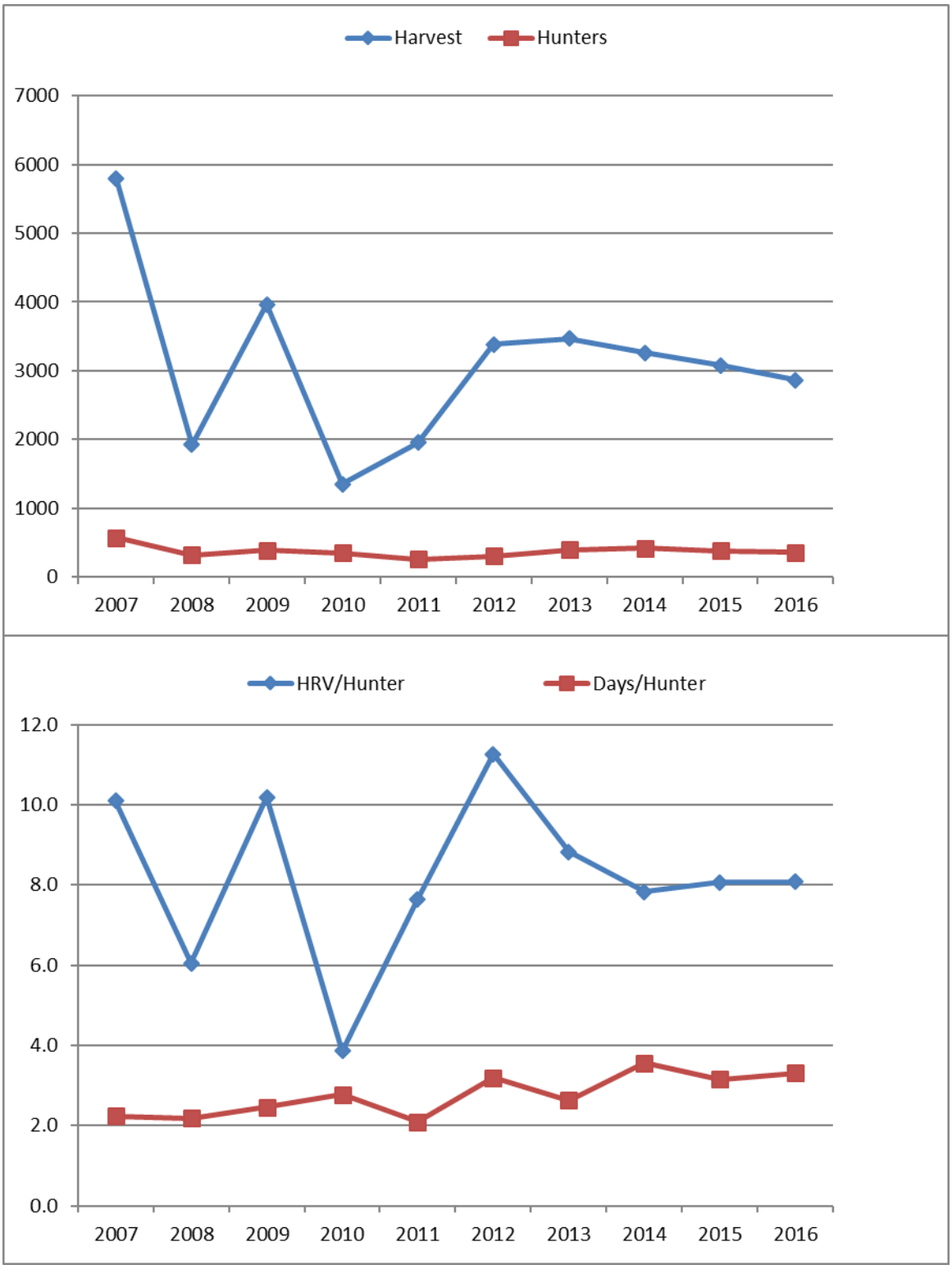

Figure 20. Top graph: Dove harvest and hunter numbers for District 2 from 2007–2016. Bottom graph: Dove harvest and days hunted per hunter for District 2 from 2007–2016.

MAJOR PUBLIC LANDS

The majority of the district is privately owned. However, WDFW and BLM own about 60,000 acres in the center of Lincoln County and about 15,000 acres in northwest Whitman County. For more information on BLM property, or to order maps, please visit the BLM website. To hunt on WDFW Wildlife Areas, you will need to display a WDFW Vehicle Access Pass (free with hunting or fishing license purchase) or a Discover Pass. For more information on WDFW lands, see the Wildlife Areas webpage.

The Washington Department of Natural Resources maintains land open to the public for recreational purposes. Visitors to DNR land should be aware that a Discover Pass is required for access. Further information regarding recreational opportunities on DNR land can be found on the DNR website.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also maintains lands associated with the Snake River open to the public for recreational purposes. Not all of these lands are open to hunting, so hunters will want to research beforehand. More information can be found here.

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) has a limited entry youth waterfowl hunt (details available through TNWR) and allows elk hunting by permit only (permits allotted via WDFW special permit draw in June).

Riverside State Park and Mount Spokane State Park, along with all county parks in Spokane County, are open to public access, but NOT to hunting.

There are several private timber companies that allow hunting in Spokane County, and throughout the district there are private landowners enrolled in WDFW hunt access programs (see Private Lands Program below and visit the WDFW Private Lands Access website).

PRIVATE LANDS

Since 1948, WDFW has worked with private landowners across the state to provide public access through a negotiated agreement. Landowners participating in a WDFW cooperative agreement retain liability protection provided under RCW 4.24.210. Landowners receive technical services, materials for posting (signs and posts), and in some cases, monetary compensation. In addition, lands under agreement are well known by WDFW Enforcement.

Currently, the private lands access program includes five basic access agreement types: Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP), Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH), Hunt by Reservation (HBR), Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP), and Register to Hunt (RTH). As of July 2017, the total accessible acreage in District 2 is 168,573 acres – 24,892 in Spokane County, 45,324 in Lincoln County, and 98,357 in Whitman County. A summary of these acres by GMU and the program

are in Table 2 below. The LHP in GMU 130 is managed by the Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA). Access is only available through WDFW special permitting and CPWMA raffle permit hunts (see WDFW's 2017 Big Game Hunting Seasons & Regulations pamphlet). More information on the other four access programs and where these enrolled lands occur can be found at WDFW's GoHunt site and at the WDFW Private Lands Access web site.

Table 2. Acres of private land enrolled in WDFW access programs by GMU in District 2.

Game Management Unit (GMU)	Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP)		Feel Free To Hunt (FFTH)		Hunt By Reservation (HBR)		Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP)		Register to Hunt (RTH)	
	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres	Cooperators	Acres
124 Mt Spokane	2	298	2	9,228						
127 Mica Peak			1	3,130						
130 Cheney	1	6,246					1	5,990		
133 Roosevelt	18	20,788	1	612						
136 Harrington	12	16,658	7	7,266						
139 Steptoe	14	10,820	6	4,850	23	48,852			2	320
142 Almota	8	12,111	6	3,248	10	18,156				
TOTAL	55	66,921	23	28,334	33	67,008	1	5,990	2	320